



THOMAS L. KANE

A GUIDE TO THE SOURCES

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Introduction

Thomas Leiper Kane was born in 1822 to John K. Kane and Jane Duval Leiper. His father was a personal friend of several U. S. Presidents, including Andrew Jackson and James K. Polk. Polk would appoint him to the federal bench in Philadelphia and, until his death in 1858, remained well connected to the power brokers in Washington, D.C. His son Thomas, also trained in the law, first learned of the Latter-day Saints through Philadelphia newspaper accounts that described the forced migration of the Mormons from their homes in Illinois in early 1846. Using connections through his father, Thomas began what would be a life-time role as a friend, mediator and peace-maker for the Mormons in their relationships with government officials and a negative public opinion about them. He travelled west to the Mormon encampments along the Missouri River Valley and assisted in the call of the Mormon Battalion in 1846, publicized their plight in an influential published lecture in 1850 called *The Mormons*, and continued throughout his life to counsel, defend and actively seek the welfare of the Latter-day Saints. He was a major factor in the peaceful resolution of the Utah War in 1857-58. And he worked to soften anti-Mormon legislation and mentored other Latter-day Saints (like George Q. Cannon) in the tasks of working with Congress and the public media to present a more accurate view of the Latter-day Saints. His extensive correspondence with Brigham Young shows a deep friendship and trust that developed between them. In 1872-73 Thomas and Elizabeth Kane journeyed to Utah and travelled with Brigham Young to his winter home in southern Utah. Elizabeth's *Twelve Mormon Homes* (1874) remains a classic account of Mormon social history.

Thomas Kane was also involved in a number of other causes during his life-time, including the anti-slavery movement and educational reform. He was a complex individual, never joining a church, but living a deeply Christian life of selfless service. He suffered with poor health throughout his life, but managed to accomplish much in spite of it. He died in 1883.

I. Manuscript Sources

The L. Tom Perry Special Collections in the Harold B. Lee Library owns the largest collection of Thomas L. and Elizabeth W. Kane Manuscripts in the world. Vault Manuscript 792 contains seventy-nine archival boxes of material, available to researchers on forty reels of microfilm. An 1100-page guide to this collection is available, and this guide includes a listing of Kane material in other repositories and biographical register Kane family members as well as of people mentioned in the Kane papers. This extensive collection was described in David J. Whittaker, "New Sources on Old Friends: The Thomas L. Kane and Elizabeth W. Kane Collection," *Journal of Mormon History* 27 (Spring 2000): 67-94. The collection includes military material (Kane fought in the American Civil War, including in the Battle of Gettysburg), extensive correspondence with Mormon leaders, family correspondence, the development of Kane, Pennsylvania, as well as an extensive collection of Elizabeth's journals and scrapbooks. For both American and Mormon history, this collection is a treasure trove of material for the serious researcher.

The BYU Library has subsequently acquired additional Thomas L. Kane and Kane Family manuscripts: Vault MSS 3190 was obtained in 2003, and is housed in an additional fourteen archival boxes. A guide (85 pages) has also been prepared for these materials. The BYU Library has been acquiring Kane manuscript since about 1978, and additional collections are described in the guides mentioned above. A sampling includes the 1852 pocket diary of Thomas L. Kane (VMSS 796); and the 1858 pocket diary of Thomas L. Kane (VMSS 807).

II. Published Sources

Thomas Leiper Kane (1822-1883)

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